



LETTERS

NHS AND THE 2017 ELECTION

General practice needs ongoing commitment to training budgets

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The NHS is a key election issue.¹ Patient demand for primary care rose by 10.5% between 2007 and 2014,² while recruiting and retaining GPs is ever more challenging. The Royal College of General Practitioners' election manifesto for NHS England includes a call to meet the health secretary's pledge of an additional 5000 GPs by 2020 and to increase GPs' training to at least four years to ensure that they have the skills to deal with a patient population with increasingly complex needs.³ We are, therefore, deeply concerned that Health Education England has announced plans to cut the educational support budget for GP training by 30% from next year.⁴

Further cuts seem likely that will seriously affect the ability of medical schools and deaneries to train the GPs of today and tomorrow. Such reductions in funding are clearly at odds with the commitment to increase GP numbers.

As representatives of academic primary care, we are also concerned by the inevitable negative effect of these cuts on the recruitment of GP educators and researchers. The recent report from the Medical Schools Council and Health Education England emphasised the essential role of primary care educators and academics in encouraging medical students to make general practice their career choice.⁵ The international standing of primary care research in the UK relies on new and committed

GPs, drawn from a strong pool of practising GPs. Such dramatic disinvestment in GP training will further undermine confidence in general practice as a career for young doctors and medical students and will serve only to deepen the current crisis in general practice.

Competing interests: No competing interests

Full response at: <http://www.bmj.com/content/357/bmj.j2024/rr>.

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- 3 Royal College of General Practitioners. Six steps for safer general practice. 2017. <http://www.rcgp.org.uk/campaign-home.aspx>.
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